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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000774

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AJ](#) [IR](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER MAMMADYAROV ON MISSILE DEFENSE

REF: A. STATE 80555

- [1](#)B. BAKU 00696
- [1](#)C. BAKU 00689
- [1](#)D. BAKU 000739
- [1](#)E. BAKU 000722
- [1](#)F. BAKU 00721

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Mammadyarov told the Ambassador June 15 that Azerbaijan only had limited and non-specific Gabala-related discussions with Russia prior to Putin's June 7 announcement. Mammadyarov recalled that as early as May 21, he had publicly hinted that the U.S.-Russia might reach a cooperative position on Gabala. Mammadyarov reiterated President Aliyev's message that the GOAJ is ready to discuss this issue "if the U.S. is interested," while asking that the GOAJ be included in or briefed on any U.S.-Russian discussions on this topic. Septel will report Mammadyarov's comments on energy and the human rights situation. End Summary.

Coordination with Russia was Minimal

[1](#)2. (C) During a June 15 meeting at which the Ambassador reviewed ref A demarche on Gabala, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov told the Ambassador that the extent of Azerbaijan's Gabala-related discussions with Russia prior to Putin's June 7 announcement was limited and non-specific. Mammadyarov said that when Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov was in Moscow in May for routine pol-mil consultations, Russian officials told Azimov that the U.S. had approached Russia about cooperating on missile defense. The Ambassador clarified that while the U.S. has indeed encouraged and invited Russia to cooperate on missile defense for some time now, the U.S. did not propose to Russia joint use of the Gabala radar station, specifically. Mammadyarov also said that when Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov was visiting Baku in late May, Mammadyarov had asked him for an update regarding U.S.-Russian talks on missile defense. According to Mammadyarov, Lavrov told him there were no serious U.S.-Russian plans, and that the U.S. had not/not proposed joint use of Gabala (ref B). Mammadyarov claimed he told Lavrov that any U.S.-Russian cooperation regarding Gabala would have to comply with article four of the Azerbaijani-Russian Gabala agreement, which requires Russia to consult with Azerbaijan first on data-sharing with a third party.

[1](#)3. (C) Mammadyarov recalled his press statement during Lavrov's visit, in which he obliquely hinted that the U.S. and Russia were talking about Gabala. (NOTE: According to a May 21 Interfax article, Mammadyarov suggested that a third party was interested in Gabala. Speaking about the joint operation of Gabala radar station, Mammadyarov said,

"Azerbaijan has not received an offer, but someone has made a relevant proposal to Russia." The Embassy has on several occasions clarified both publicly and privately that the U.S. did not propose joint use of Gabala, most recently during the May 29 visit of OVP advisor, when he met Mammadyarov - ref B.)

14. (C) Mammadyarov argued that Putin's announcement was "not that big of a surprise," noting that some U.S. working level experts have discussed the potential of using the Gabala radar for several years. Mammadyarov said this idea had been broached by Azerbaijan to DoD in 1998, but DoD had rejected it. At the same time, Mammadyarov also remarked that the Russians had indicated the June 6 Aliyev-Putin telephone call would remain confidential.

15. (C) Mammadyarov asked the Ambassador whether Russia wanted simply to share information with the U.S. or was open to having U.S. troops located at Gabala. The Ambassador reiterated President Bush's point that U.S.-Russian experts would study the technical issues. Mammadyarov also noted that Russia is building another radar on Russian territory that is designed to replace the Gabala radar's function. (NOTE: Moscow is indeed constructing a new Voronezh radar in southern Russia, which may be completed in 2008 or 2009.)

16. (C) In response to the Ambassador's question about what motivated Putin's proposal, Mammadyarov said that it fits with the broader picture of Russia flexing its muscles in the region and globally. Mammadyarov said that elements in Russia still do not believe that U.S. missile defense plans are not aimed against Russia.

Ready for Discussions, If You Want

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17. (C) Commenting on the GOAJ position toward Putin's proposal, Mammadyarov stated that President Aliyev had summarized the Azerbaijani position when he said, "We are ready if you are interested." While the GOAJ is ready for discussions, Mammadyarov asked that the GOAJ be included in any potential talks between Washington and Moscow. Mammadyarov explained that this is what he meant in his June 8 statement that "We are ready for bilateral or trilateral talks" on Gabala. Mammadyarov requested that if the U.S. and Russia jointly discuss the sharing of information from Gabala that either the GOAJ directly join these negotiations or the U.S. brief the GOAJ on these discussions. The Ambassador underscored ref A point that we will "consult fully with the Government of Azerbaijan about any U.S.-Russia discussions regarding the use of the existing Azerbaijani radar at Gabala" and that we look to Azerbaijan to be fully transparent with us as well.

Putin's Proposal Could Help Azerbaijan

18. (C) Mammadyarov made two points on why the Gabala proposal could benefit Azerbaijan. First, U.S.-Russian cooperation on Gabala "is good for Azerbaijan" because it could be "another pillar" to shore up Azerbaijan's security. This type of cooperation would help minimize the risks posed by Iran to Azerbaijan, according to Mammadyarov. Mammadyarov was uncharacteristically dismissive of the implications of Putin's proposal for Azerbaijan's relationship with Iran. He remarked that Azerbaijan is not worried about Iran with respect to the Gabala proposal because "they cannot push too hard on us." Second, Mammadyarov candidly admitted that cooperation between the U.S. and Russia on Gabala would elevate Azerbaijan's regional importance.

Comment

19. (C) Mammadyarov's explanation of the level of

Azerbaijan-Russian discussions regarding Gabala track with President Aliyev's ref D comments. At several points, however, Mammadyarov appeared to be speaking under the impression, which the Ambassador clarified, that the U.S. had in fact been talking with Russia about access to Gabala in the months or weeks before Putin's announcement, at least at the level of technical experts. At one point, while acknowledging there had been no "talks across the table," with U.S. officials on Gabala, he asserted there had been "comments in the corridor." When pressed, Mammadyarov would not say more, but it is certainly possible, as Mammadyarov himself noted, that the Russians were actively spreading misinformation about prior U.S.-Russian consultations on sharing information from the Qabala radar station.

110. (C) GOAJ officials, including President Aliyev, have noted in recent conversations that tensions between the U.S. and Russia are not helpful for Azerbaijan or the region. Aliyev was also more direct than he has ever been with OVP's Joe Wood on his long-standing interest in greater "guarantees" for Azerbaijan's security given regional tensions ref C). President Aliyev has made clear that Azerbaijan will follow the U.S. lead on Gabala--but it also seems apparent that Mammadyarov and others like Presidential advisor Novruz Mammadov see U.S.-Russian cooperation on Gabala as one way to more deeply engage the U.S. in Azerbaijan, with a specific focus on security.
DERSE